

LOADSTAR LETTER #14

September 1994 Companion newsletter for LOADSTAR #124

"Real News! Fourteen Newsletters and still No O.J. Simpson!"

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LOADSTAR@GENIE.GEIS.COM Can't Handle Anonymous Internet Customer Service

Last month there was a small flood of customer service requests via Internet to cancel subscriptions, extend subscriptions, and switch subscription status. That's fine, but when I present a printout of Email from 77907.2344@Compuserve.com to Torena, Gayle, Wanda or Linda in Customer Service and say "this guy wants his subscription extended," they'll go, "What? At least give us a customer number."

In the future please Email your entire name and address as well as your customer number so that I (Jeff) can better serve you, and not be tossed out of Customer Service on my sizable, but rapidly shrinking, rear end.

Editorial: Q-Link Throws In The Towel After Being Down For The Count For Two Years

Jeff Jones (LS) 21AUG1994. As has been expected for two years, *Quantum Link* will soon be no more. Qlink has claimed for years that there were technical problems that prevented them from supporting their C-64 forum. Writing new C-64 software to work with *America Online* would have been pretty easy. Pay me a few thousand dollars and I'd gladly do it in a month -- okay three months.

I am personally convinced that the owners so expected Qlinkers to drop their subscriptions because they would "outgrow" their C-64 that they forced the hand of fate by totally neglecting *Qlink* for years. *Qlink* last told *LOADSTAR* that they had about 30,000 subscribers online. This was back in 1990, when we could still raise them on the phone. The last time I checked, the color of money was green, whether it came from a C-64 user or IBM user. If you have 30,000 customers paying anywhere from \$8.95 to \$500.00 per month, you do anything you can to keep them. You wring every last dollar out of that cash cow. You don't shoot it because you think it's going to die soon. In fact you jury rig and patch it and do everything possible to keep making money -- even from C-64 users.

America Online is also dropping its Apple II support. A huge exodus is expected to go to *Genie* and *Delphi*, both of which are known to be friendly to Commodore users. Also the Phoenix Network, which exclusively supports the C-64/128, is expecting a big boost. The following is the "Sunset Information" left in every area of *Qlink*.

Dear Members,

As you know, *Qlink* was originally launched in November, 1985. In the years that followed you, as our loyal members, have helped us build a unique online community for Commodore computer users. I want to thank each of you for your contribution, your support and your feedback over the years.

The computing industry has changed dramatically since those first days of online communications. Commodore ceased to produce Commodore brand computers in 1993. Sadly, the company has recently closed its doors entirely. The Commodore computer, once a leader in the industry, has been replaced by faster, more powerful systems. Many software vendors no longer support the Commodore operating system.

Now we find, with great regret, that we simply can no longer support the *Qlink* service. It has become impossible for us to maintain the product up to a standard of quality that we can be proud of. Many of you I'm sure have noticed a diminished level of product quality in the last few months due to these technical limitations. Without technical support from the industry, we are not able to add new services, fix existing problems, or prevent new ones. Therefore we have made the sad decision to discontinue *Qlink* as of November 1, 1994.

We would like to thank each of you for your long and continued support and, if at all possible, keep you as part of our online community.

If you now have the ability to use *America Online* (PC-DOS, Windows or Macintosh), we invite you to convert your membership to one of these other systems. For details on what these versions have to offer and the system requirements needed to run them, see the document in this area entitled "Converting to America Online."

For details on the last month of service for *Qlink*, important dates and billing information, see the document in this area entitled "Your Final Bill."

We have enjoyed serving you. Thanks again.

Sincerely,
Steve Case

Q-Link Deathwatch & Timetable

The following are the important dates regarding the last service period. Again, this is taken from *Qlink*'s own Sunset info. Some of the following information seems to contain some typos as if the editor pasted an old section. I'll leave the text as is:

Your last monthly fee will be billed to you in September, 1994, based on your usual billing date. No monthly fees will be incurred after October 1, 1994.

You will continue to accrue hourly fees until October 31, 1994.

The last day of service will be October 31, 1994.

Your account information will be maintained for six months.

Your last monthly fee will be billed to you in advance, as usual, during September, 1994, based on your usual billing date. No monthly fees will be incurred after October 1, 1994.

You will, however, continue to incur hourly charges based on your usage for the month of October. You should receive your final bill for any additional connect-time charges on your credit card or bank statement some time in November.

If you have any questions regarding your bill you may contact our billing department by calling our toll-free number 800-327-8532.

Lifetime Members

John Brown of Parsec, Inc. told *LOADSTAR* that the moment he saw the overwhelming campaign for lifetime memberships on *Qlink* that he knew *Qlink* would die. It was widely speculated that the membership

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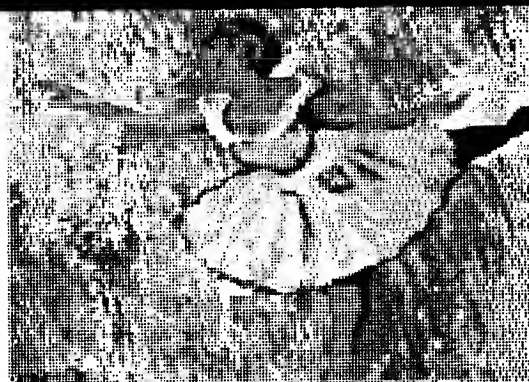
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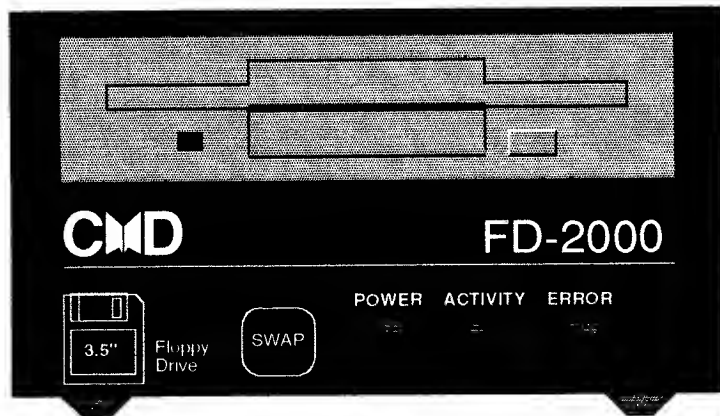
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THE UNDERGROUND

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USA

drive, in which Qlink members paid \$99 in order to waive all future monthly fees, was a covert attempt to generate funds to launch America Online, which is now a reknowned telecommunications giant.

Oddly enough Qlink comes through on this lifetime membership by allowing Qlink users to join America Online with lifetime memberships. All they have to do is (uh oh) buy a PC and a modem -- and do it quick! The following is also from the sunset information.

Lifetime memberships on QLink will be honored with America Online memberships. If you have a QLink Lifetime Membership and would like to transfer that membership to a new America Online account, please follow these instructions:

1: Order your free America Online software kit by calling our toll free number, 1-800-827-6364.

2: After you register your new account, please contact our billing department through the keyword BILLING or by calling 1-800-827-6364. One of our customer service representatives will verify your new account information and convert your Lifetime Membership to your new account. Please note that you will need to choose a new screen name for your America Online membership. Screen names are not transferable.

Please note that your QLink account will automatically be canceled on November 1, 1994. You must register a new America Online account by April 1, 1995 in order to maintain your Lifetime Membership status.

Is There a 1 Gigabyte RAMLink In your Future? Intel Claims Flash Memory "Breakthrough"

07/28/94 SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., 1994 JUL 28 (NB) -- In October, 1990, Intel announced its flash memory at a cost of \$256 for one megabyte (MB). In a special press conference attended by Newsbytes, Dr. Stephan K. Lai, director of Flash Technology Development and Manufacturing for Intel, said that his group had achieved a "breakthrough" in flash technology that allows two or more bits of data to be stored in a single cell.

Naming the new technology -- multilevel cell (MLC) -- Intel predicts that by the year 2000 it will develop gigabit (GB) flash memory at a cost of \$.50 per MB. Commercial development is not expected to begin until sometime in 1995. The company also predicts that the ability to store four bits per cell can be accomplished.

Dr. Lai claimed that his group had proven and established the basic physics involved in the process of MLC technology. He also stated that there was much to achieve now with the engineering problems involved.

Intel says MLC Flash applications will be effective in mass storage, such as flash arrays and PCMCIA (Personal Computer Memory Card International Association) cards, digital audio, digital photography, digital video and computer game cartridges.

Lai said, "This kind of cost factor enables applications that we have not even thought of." Co-inventor of Intel's ETOX flash memory technology, Lai, added, "ETOX flash technology it perfectly suited for this achievement."

At the press conference, Intel demonstrated its first accomplishments of MLC storage.

He further commented, "In four generations of flash memory through ETOX IV, the flash density has increased by a factor of 64, while the media cost reduced by a factor of 32."

In 1988, when Intel first announced its flash memory technology, the initial cost was \$640 per megabyte.

[Note from Jeff: This is exciting news. Perhaps the hard drive will go the way of the dinosaur when we can have

LOADSTAR Internet Address exchange

GE Mail Item 7070628

94/07/24

05:19

From: RMK@LOCKE.CCIL.ORG@INTERNET#
COMM INTERNET GWY

To: LOADSTAR

Online Support

Sub: Email Address Exchange

Hi! I'm on the Internet, and I would like to be in contact with other LOADSTAR people. My address is rmk@locke.ccil.org That's a freenet system in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Rick Kephart << rmk@locke.ccil.org >>

1GB RAM disks for under \$1000. A properly shielded Flash RAM disk would be faster and more reliable than a hard drive.] (Patrick McKenna/19940728/Press Contact: Cynthia Lempert, Walt & Sommerhauser, tel 408-496-2978)

UK Teenager Arrested For US Internet Hacking

08/01/94 LONDON, ENGLAND, 1994 AUG 1 (NB) -- Officers from Scotland Yard's Computer Crime Division have revealed they have arrested a 16-year-old youth in connection with alleged unauthorized access to the Pentagon's computer systems in the US.

Police were requested to arrest the boy after contact with US government security agencies who advised that the youth had been caught in an "electronic trap" set up after worries about system crackers who were freely roaming the unclassified side of the Pentagon's computer network.

Now prosecutors face the interesting prospect of charging the unnamed youth under the Computer Misuse Act in a juvenile (children's) court. This would be the first time such an action has been taken, Newsbytes notes.

To date, other computer misuse cases have been held before a Crown Court, the second level of the UK's judicial legal process. With the juvenile court, however, no such "upgrade" mechanism exists.

Interestingly, some press reports suggest that the CIA was involved in tipping off the British police in the case. Other reports suggest that FBI was involved. Peter Sommer, a London-based security expert, told Newsbytes that he was surprised at the conflict of agency names in the press. "If anything, I'm surprised it was not the Secret Service or the National Security Agency," he told Newsbytes.

"As far as I have seen, the youth is likely to be charged under Section 1 and 3 of the Computer Misuse Act. Section 1 refers to the unauthorized access, while Section 3, the most serious, refers to alteration of data," he said. "This raises the interesting question of what, exactly, the 16 year old has allegedly done."

Police in the case are saying nothing. A spokesman for Scotland Yard told Newsbytes that the 16-year-old has

been released on bail, pending charges under the Computer Misuse Act involving alleged unauthorized access and illegal modification of data.

The Police say that the youth will have a special interview in November of this year, by which time the authorities will have a much better idea of what, exactly, they can charge him with.

While the police are officially saying nothing, the computer press reports that the police's computer crime division claim that they were amazed and stunned by the hacker's knowledge.

"He really was like a character in War Games. There doesn't appear to be any malice behind it and the Pentagon computers he infiltrated held only unclassified data, such as ship designs and simulated battle plans. But we are still trying to assess the damage he has done," said a spokesman. "After that, it is down to the prosecution service and juvenile court to decide what action is appropriate." (Steve Gold/19940801)

Jeff Gets Arrogant With His RAMLink

After using RAMLink for over three years with absolutely no data loss, Jeff Jones powered down for the weekend without first backing up his RAMLink to a CMD Hard Drive Partition. He returned to work, powered up his system and found his data intact. Don't try this at home!

Computer Becomes World Checkers Champion

08/26/94 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, U.S.A., 1994 AUG 24 (NB) -- The test of man versus computer has again put man in the losing category as a Silicon Graphics computer checkers program has won out against its human opponent.

In 1992, Dr. Marion Tinsley beat Silicon Graphics' computer checkers program to retain his title of World Checkers Champion. Due to serious illness this week, Dr. Tinsley resigned in the midst of a new championship tournament, tied with six draws, which resulted in a forfeit to the computer. But the new champ was immediately challenged by the number two-ranked player in the world, Don Lafferty.

Checkers may seem pretty simple and straightforward, but Silicon Graphics' Challenge XL computer indicates otherwise, as its 16 processors, a

gigabyte (GB) of RAM, and five 2GB disk drives whirl away analyzing every move.

A temperamental player? On Tuesday, Lafferty won his first victory and the computer crashed. Since this was its first defeat of the tournament, observers joked about its sportsmanship. It was quickly rebooted and prepared for the next match, which it won.

Ashley Mooser, spokesperson for Silicon Graphics, told Newsbytes, "280 billion bits of information are required for the computer to play at this level. It has been estimated that 560 billion bits of data would be required to cover all of the information that goes into a chess game."

The current XL computer is four times faster than its predecessors which set a record of 43 draws, seven losses, and five wins in championship competition with World Champion, Dr. Marion Tinsley.

Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer, creator of the Chinook checkers software running on the Challenge XL computer, sat across the board from Lafferty and replicated Lafferty's moves on the computer's monitor. According to Silicon Graphics, the computer takes about two minutes to analyze its next move.

This championship took place at the Computer Museum on Boston's waterfront. Spokesperson Gail Jennes told Newsbytes, "We are very happy to be able to bring this event to the public. It is a great way to show the contest between humans and machines, as well as showcasing the latest developments in artificial intelligence."

Lafferty, the reigning US Checkers Champion had 1 win and 12 draws with the computer, while the computer also had one win, as of 9:00 a.m. EST Aug 24. A championship is decided by who is ahead after 20 games. Four more games took place Aug. 24 and the final two occurred on Aug. 25. The remaining six games to complete the 20-game championship, all ended in draws. According to championship rules, this means Silicon Graphics' Challenge XL Computer, running Chinook software, is the current World Champion Checkers title holder.

Results with film footage were scheduled for NBC's Nightly News with Tom Brokaw on August 25. (Patrick McKenna/19940826/Press Contact: Ashley Mooser, Silicon Graphics, tel 415-390-2863)

Loadstar Letter Needs Writers

Email or mail your C-64/128 articles to the *LOADSTAR LETTER* (address on page 1). Submissions are accepted *only* on disk. If you have news or tips, send them. Every little bit helps, and we'd like to see more reader input on *LOADSTAR*.

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RAMLink

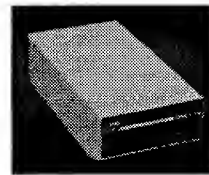
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